



U.S. Representative

Bernie Sanders

An Update on Environmental Issues

Winter 1999



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Fellow Vermonter:

I wanted to take this opportunity to keep you informed about some of the important environmental issues pending in the 106th Congress.

Maintaining the health of our natural environment is one of the most important responsibilities we have. Our air, water, land and wildlife are irreplaceable, and, as part of the planet's environment ourselves, our own health and well-being are inextricably bound to the natural world. That is why protecting our environment must be a top priority.

Unfortunately, that has not been the case in Washington, D.C. over the past several years. Neither the 104th or 105th Congresses could be characterized as friendly to our environment. On the contrary, the Majority leadership on Capitol Hill has pushed an aggressive anti-environmental agenda that has threatened to blot out more than 25 years of progress in protecting our air, water, wildlife, forests and our individual health and safety. This agenda would have even gone so far as to prevent local communities from making their own independent decisions about zoning and land use.

Those of us who are concerned about the environment have been successful in blunting some of the worst examples of this agenda, including the defeat of H.R. 4570, the Omnibus National Parks and Public Lands Act, which would have accelerated timber harvesting on public lands, restricted certain protections for threatened lands, and opened up more wilderness for exploitation. We were also successful in stripping several anti-environmental "riders" from last year's omnibus budget bill. Clearly, proponents of these anti-environmental policies, who put greed and profit ahead of protecting the environment, will continue to try to gut our environmental protections. Those of us who treasure our natural heritage must continue to remain vigilant.

This effort must continue on an international level as well. The rapidly-developing global economy presents significant challenges to the environmental community. Huge multinational corporations are continually pushing for the relaxation or elimination of environmental protections around the world, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regularly makes reduced spending for environmental protection a condition of aid to developing nations. Some of these nations respond to these pressures by exploiting their own resources to provide increased exports. I have been very active in the effort to steer our nation's overseas economic policy, including its role in the IMF and other trade organizations, in the direction of responsible, sustainable economic development that includes environmental protection. I also opposed "fast-track" trade negotiating authority, which would have barred Congress from amending proposed trade agreements that ignore important environmental and labor concerns.

We must be sure our global trade policies, and the agreements we sign to implement those policies, respect the environment and protect our natural heritage.

Vermonters can take justifiable pride in our state's reputation of deep respect for the environment, and I am proud to have one of the strongest pro-environmental voting records in Congress.

I will continue to work to make sure the Earth we leave for our children is cleaner and better-protected than the one we inherited. If you have any questions about an environmental issue, or any other concern, please do not hesitate to contact my Burlington office at **1 Church Street, 2nd floor, Burlington, VT 05401, (800) 339-9834**, or my Washington office at **2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, (202) 225-4115**. You can also contact me through e-mail at **bernie@mail.house.gov**, and don't forget to drop in on my home page at **www.house.gov/bernie/** to keep up on issues in Congress.

Sincerely yours,

Bernie
Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress



Some Major Environmental Issues for the 106th Congress

Stopping Global Warming

According to recent data from NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the World Meteorological Organization, 1998 was the warmest year on record. In a recent policy statement, the American Geophysical Union, one of the world's major scientific organizations, concluded there is growing evidence that the release of chemicals produced by humans has an effect on climate.

Despite this evidence of global warming, despite its potential for inflicting devastating consequences on our world, and despite the obvious contribution of human activities to the problem, U.S. corporate interests continue to oppose any serious effort to address this problem, and the U.S. government has been dragging its feet. The Kyoto Climate Change Accord – also known as the Kyoto Protocol – written in December, 1997, calls for industrialized nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5 percent overall between 2008 and 2012. The Protocol requires ratification by 55 nations, which account for at least 55 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions in 1990.

I strongly support the goals of the Kyoto Protocol, and I want the U.S. to do more to get nations like China, India and South Korea to take real steps towards reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions, such as adopting cleaner



Compact florescent lights use only one-fourth the energy of conventional light

bulbs, saving money and reducing the production of carbon dioxide.

Source: World Wildlife Fund

technologies as part of their own development plans. China, for example, is projected to be the largest source of greenhouse gases by the year 2015. If we are going to be successful in the effort to stop global warming, we must bring **all** nations together in this effort.

The United States must take a strong leadership role in combating this threat.

Our country, with 5 percent of the world's population, produces more than 25 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. We do not have to wait for the Kyoto Protocol to be ratified by the Senate – where it faces determined opposition – to begin reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. What's more, as we develop policies to reduce emissions, we should take steps to ensure that multi-national corporations cannot export pollution, as they can export jobs, by moving manufacturing facilities with obsolete pollution control technologies to developing nations.

Conserving the Land

Preserving our open lands and controlling cancer-like sprawl continue to be important environmental efforts, and one tool in those efforts that is proving effective is the purchase of land for non-development purposes. Last December, the Arlington, Virginia-based Conservation Fund announced its acquisition of 296,000 acres of forests and wilderness in Vermont, New York and New Hampshire, protecting this land from possible exploitation. In January, President Clinton proposed spending **\$1 billion** for land acquisition and protection in FY 2000 as part of his next budget. This proposal, dubbed the “**Lands Legacy Initiative**,” would include a 125 percent increase in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and \$442 million for federal land purchases. The National Wildlife Federation called this initiative “a welcome start,” and I will be strongly supporting it.



Defending the Endangered Species Act

1998 marked the 25th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, passed to protect wildlife that was on the verge of extinction, such as our national symbol, the bald eagle. Today, an estimated 16,000 bald eagles are soaring through the skies in the 48 contiguous states alone. But the ESA has become a flashpoint for controversies, often between defenders of the environment and landowners or develop-

ers who feel their property rights are being usurped.

These controversies have grown more intense in Congress in recent years. Funding authorization for the ESA ended in 1992, and the fight to appropriate new funds each year has been a vigorous one. Some in Congress would do away with the ESA altogether; more reasonable minds have sought ways to try to decrease the tensions between the opposing interests on either side of the ESA. In the 105th Congress, I co-sponsored **H.R. 2351, the Endangered Species Recovery Act**, legislation aimed at strengthening America's commitment to protecting wildlife while also offering assistance to property owners and to local communities and governments. I will continue to support strong protections for our wildlife.

Keeping Our Air Clean

The Clean Air Act, passed in 1970, has contributed greatly to improved air quality over the last 25 years, but we still have a long way to go. Air pollution is a major health hazard. For example, asthma, which experts believe is due in part to poor air quality, is at an all-time high, affecting between 14 and 15 million Americans, including nearly 5 million children. Many air quality problems in Vermont and the Northeast are due in large part to emissions from Midwestern sources. In order to address these and other air quality problems, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently issued a number of regulations to control pollution, including forcing states to reduce the amount of fine particles they emit. EPA is strengthening National Ambient Air Quality Standards, implementing a Regional Haze Program, and addressing high ozone levels through the Nitrogen Oxide State Implementation Plan. While some Midwestern states are challenging these rules, it is expected they will go into effect. I will continue to fight for strong air quality standards.

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Other Environmental Issues of Concern

Fighting For Strong Organic Food Labeling Rules

Over the past 30 years, there have been growing concerns about the quality and safety of our food supply. This relates to the growing use of chemicals and certain farming and food processing techniques that may pose health concerns and harm the environment. In response to those concerns, an entire organic food industry has been established. Millions of Americans purchase organic foods and are willing to pay higher prices for them.

Vermont has the well-deserved reputation as an important source for these organic food products. Vermont's organic food industry includes 170 certified farms, and there are many others who employ organic methods. Sales of organic food products from Vermont top \$25 million annually. Giant agri-business corporations, attracted by potential profits in the fast-growing organic food industry, do not want to be bothered with actually selling food that is pure and natural. They would like "organic" to mean whatever

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40% of our medicines come from sources in the wild.

Source: National Wildlife Federation

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they want it to mean, including food produced with irradiation, bio-engineered food and food grown with sewage sludge as fertilizer. That's why defining what is and what is not "organic" food is so

important. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is in the process of creating a rule defining what "organic" food is, and I have been actively involved in that process.

Last year, the USDA proposed rules that would have adopted a very loose definition of "organic" food, opening the door for some of the food-producing practices I noted above. That was entirely unacceptable, and I told Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman as much. The USDA received **280,000** letters of protest, and finally, we received assurances from Secretary Glickman that the final language of the "organic" rule would be closer to the much higher standard recommended by the National Organic Standards Board. More recently, a USDA official announced that the Department's proposed rules will prohibit labeling as "organic" foods that have been irradiated, genetically-engineered or treated with antibiotics. That was encouraging. I will continue to monitor the USDA very closely and do my best to make sure that in their final rules, organic means organic.

Promoting Sustainable Development

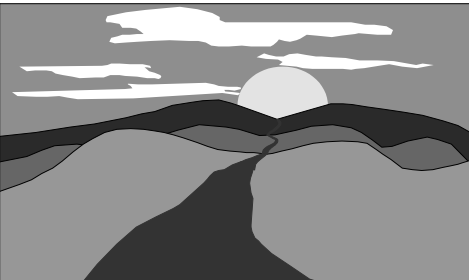
As the former mayor of Burlington, and now as a Member of Congress, I have sought ways to promote economic development that works in harmony with the environment. I absolutely do not believe that there needs to be a contradiction between creating decent paying jobs

and protecting the environment. Last September, I was proud to attend the announcement of a **\$1 million** federal grant for Burlington's "eco-park" sustainable development project. I worked very closely with the city to make this grant possible. The "eco-park," located in Burlington's Intervale, will be a state-of-the-art facility for sustainable development, small business incubation, and job creation. One of its major features will be the use of co-generated steam from the municipally-owned McNeil power plant to provide heat and energy to a variety of agricultural and environmental technology businesses.

The American Heritage Rivers Program

Last summer, President Clinton designated the Connecticut River as an "American Heritage River," making it eligible for increased federal resources devoted to environmental protection and to economic assistance. I worked closely with other New England lawmakers to win this designation for the Connecticut River, which was one of only 14 rivers – out of 126 submitted for consideration – to win this designation. Fifteen federal agencies have agreed to work together to improve the river and its environs. Projects to accomplish this could include addressing non-point pollution problems, fish restoration, and riverfront revitalization in Brattleboro and Bellows Falls.

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More than 430,000 miles of roads – approximately 8 times the mileage of America's interstate highway system – cut through U.S. national forests.

Source: Natural Resources Defense Council

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Keeping Our Water Clean

In October 1998, Congress passed legislation giving the EPA \$1.35 billion for clean water state revolving fund grants and \$382 million more for infrastructure project grants to address water quality. Congress also provided the full \$145 million requested by the Administration to support EPA's activities under the Clean Water Action Plan, increasing funding for non-point pollution management, state grants, and other activities. In total, funding for clean water initiatives has been

increased by 20 percent over last year. However, one program important to Vermont dairy farmers – the Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP), administered through the Department of Agriculture – received \$26 million **less** than last year. I will continue to strongly support adequate funding for clean water legislation, and I will fight for increased funding for EQIP this year, because it provides critical assistance to farmers to control animal waste runoff.



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If you receive more than one copy of this newsletter, we apologize. Please feel free to pass the extra copy along to an interested friend.

This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense.

Helpful Telephone Numbers For Environmental Information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

General Number	(202) 260-2090
EPA Region I (includes Vermont)	(617) 918-1111
Office of Indoor Air	(202) 564-9701
Office of Air and Radiation	(202) 260-7400
Office of Water	(202) 260-5700
Public Information Center – Publications	(202) 260-5922
Inspector General’s Hotline	(202) 260-4977

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Secretary’s Office	(802) 241-3600
Department of Environmental Conservation	(802) 241-3808
Department of Fish and Wildlife	(802) 241-3700
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation	(802) 241-3670



Corporate Welfare Hurts the Environment

Every year, the U.S. government doles out **more than \$125 billion in “corporate welfare” – tax breaks, subsidies and other wasteful spending** – to huge, profitable corporations who do not need taxpayers’ support. Many of these corporate welfare programs also contribute to the degradation of our environment.

Let me give you one example of how we can cut corporate welfare to help protect our environment, specifically, our public lands. Last year, I introduced an amendment to the Interior Department bill that cut \$50 million in corporate welfare – in the form of the Fossil Energy Research and Development Program, a huge giveaway to oil and coal companies – and transferred \$20 million of that money into increasing payments in lieu of taxes to local governments whose boundaries include public lands, like the Green Mountain National Forest. This combination of responsible fiscal and environmental policy was backed by environmental and consumer groups and won bi-partisan support in the House. The vote was 241-185 to adopt the amendment.

